1994 International Year of the Family
Année internationale de la famille
Año Internacional de la Familia
Международный год семьи
السنة الدولية للاسرة
国际家庭年

Occasional Papers Series, No.8 1993

Family Enrichment: Programmes to Foster Healthy Family Development

United Nations

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UNITED NATIONS
Vienna, 1993

Paper prepared for the IYF secretariat by Claudia S. Arp, David H. Arp and Vera Mace. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Secretariat.

Preface

Throughout the history of civilization, the family has been the basic unit of society and continues to be so today. As the twenty-first century approaches, the family must be safeguarded and strengthened as human survival depends upon providing the best possible conditions for the birth and upbringing of children.

The functions of families and what is known about their strengths provide a basis for family enrichment programmes to foster the development of healthy families. Prevention and early intervention, including family enrichment programmes, must be a priority for government and non-governmental agencies if strong families are to provide a foundation for a changing world.

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Introduction

Throughout history, strong marriages and families have been the foundation of well-being. Nicholas Stinnett wrote:

> "As we look back in history we see that the quality of family life is important to the strength of nations. There is a pattern in the rise and fall of great societies ... . When these societies were at the peak of their power and prosperity, the family was strong and highly valued. When family life became weak in these societies, when the family was not valued - when goals became extremely individualistic - the society began to deteriorate and eventually fell."[1]

History is a lesson that the continuance of the family must be safeguarded and strengthened in the world today.

Why are families needed? Unlike other forms of life, human children have to be nurtured and cared for over an extended period or they will die. The continued existence of the human race is a primary function of families.[2,3]

Family patterns have changed and adapted through cultural development over the ages and continue to change. The primary need to love and nurture the human child in order that the generations may continue exists, despite the ongoing changes in the world.

The need for the family in human society is as great as ever and it may be even greater because of the increasing complexity of life. The functions and opportunities of the family are not limited to individual self-contained units: they have ever-increasing possibilities of expanding. The healthier and stronger a family unit is, the more likely it is that such units may constitute a strong nation and, in turn, strong nations make a stronger world.

With the recurrence of profound changes, families are facing difficult challenges. Families are at risk. With such realities as poverty, war, mass migration, changes in the workforce, domestic violence, drug addiction and crime, there is a need for programmes focused on families ranging from the educational and preventive to therapeutic. This spectrum can be graphically demonstrated as follows:

Education/prevention ..... Intervention/therapeutic
(Strength-centred) ..... (Problem-centred)

Prevention programmes are described in terms such as "enrichment", "wellness" and "self-improvement". Since the family is the basic social unit, and thus affects the direction of societies, it is critical that families be helped to meet their own needs. Family enrichment programmes can provide competencies to enable families to be appropriately self-sufficient. Enrichment programmes empower individuals within families and the family as a unit; this enables families to contribute to the communities and nations in which they live, which can strengthen governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Proactive services give priority to the prevention of serious trouble rather than to meeting remedial needs. Catalano and Dooley define proactive services as those that prevent the occurrence of risk factors, and reactive services as those that improve the responses to risk factors.[4] There are several reasons to emphasize prevention programmes. For instance, prevention is cheaper. Widespread family wellness programmes could reduce the economic burdens of some nations. Prevention is broad-based. In recent years there has been an increase of skill-oriented prevention programmes that overlap with remedial programmes and reach many of those people who were overlooked in the past. Prevention is also easier. Working with families who are basically healthy

is not as complicated as working with unhealthy (dysfunctional) families. Working with families before they are in crises conserves energy and time that can be used to promote growth. By increasing prevention-oriented services, it is possible to change disruptive and destructive patterns and to offer constructive help to families.[5]

In order to leave a legacy of family wellness to future generations, it is critical that the concept of family enrichment be emphasized and taught. Strengthening family life needs to be a top priority. It is time to emphasize prevention, to reorder values and to make a commitment to family life and human relationships in terms of the way in which time and energy are spent. To do this it will be necessary to develop national and international priorities for family wellness. Countries need to match remedial programmes with prevention and enrichment programmes. Prevention may be seen as the equivalent of the prenatal care of future families and immunization and vaccination against disease.

To improve family life in the future, present marriages need to be strengthened and couples must be prepared for healthy marriages. Abuse prevention, family planning and preparation-for-parenthood programmes can help to bring needed change in future families. Family-life education programmes can help families to raise emotionally healthy children who are well prepared to be partners and parents in the twenty-first century.

In a press release, the President of the Carnegie Corporation considered the transformed American family, "largely unprepared to meet the challenges of raising a child".[6] He asked the Government, health-care institutions, schools and voluntary organizations to cooperate in providing a network of supportive health, educational and social services that would be available to families with children and adolescents in all communities. Among the family services that he termed essential were family support organizations that serve some of the same functions as the traditional extended family: augmenting parents' knowledge of and skill in child-rearing; helping them to deal with the problems of adolescents; enriching families' skills in coping with stress; affording families access to services; facilitating the development of information support networks; and helping families to organize in order to counteract dangerous trends in the community.

One recurring theme in the research on early intervention, conducted by the Carnegie Corporation in 1991, was the potential value of teaching young parents to deal with their own children effectively. As children grow, parents can be helped by programmes that promote positive verbal interactions among family members and the verbal responsiveness of adults to children. The great challenge is to devise family-centred interventions that will enhance children's cognitive development and emotional resiliency in situations of chronic poverty and relative social isolation.

Professor Small of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development described the need for parent support as a problem requiring inter-parental communication. Parents need a way of obtaining social support from other parents by sharing experiences, pooling information and exchanging coping strategies. A mutual-aid ethic among parents who have a common concern for the well-being of their developing adolescents and yet who bring diverse experiences to parenting their adolescents can be helpful.

The Minnesota Council on Family Relations included the following statement in a Position Statement on Strengthening Families:

> "We believe that in every person there is potential for growth and change, that too often this potential is unrecognized, untapped or underutilized ... . We further believe that one of the most significant forces for growth and change in persons can be a supportive, nurturing group. Through interaction with persons whom we trust, we are able to explore better ways of doing things ... . And we believe that the family is a group that more than any other group determines the kind of people we are."[7]

I. Basic elements of functional families

"A functional family is the healthy soil out of which individuals can become mature human beings."[8]

Family enrichment or wellness programmes can best be developed and implemented if the functions of families are used as a foundation. The primary functions of families might be summarized as set out below.

The first function of the family is to pass on human values from generation to generation. Some civilizations believed that people gained immortality by passing on their essential selves to their children. But a child is not merely the propagation of parental personality. Children do not belong to parents. They are a sacred trust, the most sacred trust that men and women can receive. The task of parents is to accept children for who they are; to love them; to care for them; and to strive to surround them with wholesome and positive influences. In this way, positive human values such as honesty, caring and tolerance will be passed on to the next generation.[9]

The second function of the family is to provide a place for all its members, from birth to death. To fulfil this function, skills for achieving and maintaining human relationships must be learned. Human relationships need to be based upon an acceptance of the commonalities of all while valuing diversity within the family, which includes respect for each family member's unique personality. Extending this concept beyond the individual family can lead to improved relations between races, faiths and nations.

The third function of the family is to provide a place in which its members can learn how to achieve and maintain human relationships and how to work together for the common good. Ultimately, this includes working for world peace.

The fourth function of the family is to find ways of sharing and passing on the message of a better world so that all persons will want it and will work for it. Families are the primary vehicle for the preparation of ideas and human goals across generations.

These are noble family functions that can be better fulfilled through family enrichment.

Qualities of strong families

Much of what has been written about families has focused on what is wrong with the family. From an enrichment-oriented preventive focus, the emphasis has been upon pathology. It is critical, however, to build upon what is right about families and to provide tools for families to be strengthened. Research on family strengths provides, therefore, a valuable point of beginning for family enrichment programmes.[10]

Stinnett's research project spanned more than a decade and included over 3,000 families in every State of the United States of America and 20 other countries in Africa, Europe and Latin America. The top six qualities of strong families identified through Stinnett's research[11,12] are summarized below.

Appreciation

Every individual has a basic need to be appreciated. Strong families have the habit of looking for each other's good qualities and expressing their appreciation. Every person has strengths and positive qualities; the family is the primary place where the affirmation of strengths should occur. Healthy families concentrate on the positive.

Spending time together

Strong families genuinely enjoy being together. This requires pre-planning and structure. Time together doesn't just happen; strong families make it happen. One interesting pattern emerged from Stinnett's research: there was a high frequency with which families participated in outdoor activities. A possible explanation is that when families are together outdoors, there are fewer distractions and they can concentrate on each other. Also physical exercise (especially outdoors) contributes to health and to personal feelings of well-being, both of which can strengthen the family.

Commitment

Strong families are deeply committed to the family group and to promoting each other's happiness and welfare. While there has been little research on family commitment, Yankelovich observed that society was in the process of leaving behind an excessive self-centred orientation and of moving towards a new ethic of commitment emphasizing new rules of living that supported self-fulfilment through deeper personal relationships.[13] Mace[14] writes that commitment produces behavioural change. When life becomes overwhelming and family members are pulled in many different directions, strong families take the initiative in restructuring their lifestyle. They may eliminate the discretionary activities in which they are involved that do not benefit the family. Such families also set realistic family goals that will enhance the quality of their family relationships.[15]

Good communication patterns

Strong families demonstrate good communication patterns. This quality is closely related to the previous ones. Good communication requires an investment of time.[14]

Not only do strong families talk to each other, but they also listen well, thus communicating a mutual respect for one another. They are also willing to deal with conflict and are committed to finding solutions that are best for everyone. They are able to express their feelings and do so in non-combative, constructive ways. They are able to make creative use of conflict. This kind of broad-based communication is integral to the life of strong families.

High degree of religious orientation

Strong families tend to have a high degree of religious orientation. The research undertaken during the past 40 years shows a positive relationship of religion to marital happiness and family well-being. Mace[14] and Stinnett[1] point out that this quality of strong families goes beyond attending the church, synagogue or mosque, or participating in religious activities. Stinnett found that an awareness of a higher power gave many families a sense of purpose and strength. This awareness also helped them to be more patient with each other, more forgiving, quicker to get over anger, more positive and more supportive in their relationships.[16]

Ability to deal with crises in a positive manner

Strong families are able to deal with crises in a constructive way. They are able to deal with problems while remaining supportive of one another. They have problem-solving skills and are able to see some positive elements even in the darkest of situations. They are able to identify the crisis and to attack the problem and not each other.[17]

These characteristics of strong families coincided with the findings of other researchers who had examined healthy families.[18,19,20,21] What is needed to develop these qualities?

Developing healthy families

Individuals need to be prepared for marriage and parenthood. Both marriage and parenting are very complex and challenging responsibilities that not only affect individuals and family members, but also society as a whole. Bradshaw[8] proposed that families should be viewed as systems, the chief component of which is the marital partnership. If that is functioning well, the children will have an opportunity of growing up as happy, healthy people. He summarized the needs of families within that system: a sense of worth, a sense of physical security or productivity, a sense of intimacy and relatedness, a sense of unified structure, a sense of responsibility, a sense of being challenged and stimulated, a sense of joy and an opportunity for affirmation and spiritual grounding. A child needs a mother and father who are committed to each other in a basically healthy relationship. Thus, family enrichment programmes consider the couple, the children and the family as an interrelated unit.

While there are many components of a healthy family, a significant one is the positive role models provided by parents. Positive parental role models help children to work towards their own maturity. There is general agreement among child development specialists that the ideal setting for the healthy development of a child is two loving parents, mutually fulfilled in their marriage, who can provide their children with warm, non-possessive love. In such a family, a child identifies positively with the parent of his or her own sex, and learns by observation how to relate positively to the parent of the opposite sex.[22]

Many researchers believe that the evidence for the emphasis upon strong marriages is compelling. Popenoe states:

> "Social science research is almost never conclusive. There are always methodological difficulties and stones left unturned. Yet in the decades of work as a social scientist, I know of few other bodies of data in which the weight of evidence is so decisively on one side of the issue: for children, two parent-families are preferable to single-parent and step-families!"*

Popenoe's research strongly suggests the need for developing well-balanced programmes designed to strengthen existing and future family relationships.

Children who grow up in happy, intact, functional families unconsciously learn the roles they will later need in marriage and parenthood. They also gain a deep, satisfying sense of self-worth and a respect for others who share their lives. Such experiences help them to mature as self-confident adults capable of relating positively and creatively to other people, not only in the small world of the home but also in the community.

Family wellness is characterized by maturity in which parental roles model the following:

How to be a man or woman;

How to be a husband or wife;

How to be a father or mother;

How to achieve intimate relationships with others;

How to be a functional human being.

Parents can best model healthy roles when they are part of a functional, strong family.[8]

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*As quoted in Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle was right", *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1993), p. 82.

Realities: today's families at risk

Never have families and individuals had to live in such a complex, problematic world with so many choices to make: choices that often lead to feelings of guilt, fear, despair and helplessness. Families are at risk. Families are more transient and mobile and can no longer count on the extended family for support. The fragmentation and dissolution of extended families, and the increase of families headed by single parents are all issues in today's world. Family life in the 1990s is unlike that of any other period in history and is changing more rapidly than ever before. Such changes are accelerated by the influences of technological advances including transportation, telecommunications and computers, all of which are recent developments.

Environmental issues, overpopulation, and economic recession along with war, crime and violence, political upheaval, famine and the resettlement of refugees are some of the serious global problems that concern caregivers.

It is important to acknowledge that these problems exist and have a direct and indirect impact on families. It is known that poor relationships within the family are closely related to many problems in society such as juvenile delinquency and domestic abuse. Such an interrelationship of what happens within the families, communities and the world needs to be considered in the development and implementation of family enrichment programmes.

Armand Nicholi expressed the relationship between families and societal realities in this way:

> "The breakdown of the family contributes significantly to the major problems confronting our society today. Research data make unmistakably clear a strong relationship between broken families and the drug epidemic, the increase in out-of-wedlock pregnancies, the rise in violent crime, and the unprecedented epidemic of suicide among children and adolescents ... . We need a radical change in our thinking about family. We need a society where people have the freedom to be whatever they choose - but if they choose to have children, then those children must be given the highest priority."*

In the midst of a complicated, rapidly changing world, it must be remembered that every human being is a person of value. Every person has a basic need to belong. Every person wants to be a part of the smallest democracy at the heart of society. Over the years, the family has been the predominant means of nurturing and transmitting values to the next generation. Nothing could be more important. Children are culture's greatest natural resource. The future of the world depends on its children and its children's children. In a real sense, therefore, as go families, so goes the world.

While children are the greatest natural resource, they also require a greater economic investment than in the past. For example, in the agrarian societies of the past, children were seen as an economic asset. Large families were desired for work on the farm and, thus, increased productivity. Children were rarely sent to college and so did not drain the family budget with the sort of expenses that are more common in industrialized societies. In a sense, children provided the only security that people could count on in their old age. Increasingly, however, children require income instead of producing it. Still, they are the best investment that can be made with long-term benefits for humankind. Children need to be viewed as crucial members of the family unit whose needs must be met if families are to be healthy.

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*Remarks taken from the text of a presentation delivered by Armand Nicholi in 1991 and compiled in a monograph entitled "What do we know about successful families", which is obtainable from Grad Resources, 13612 Midway Road, Suite 500, Dallas, Texas 75244, United States.

Family enrichment

Family enrichment programmes have existed for many years. Those who have developed and implemented programmes in the area of family enrichment, and written on the subject, agree that certain basic skills are derived from family functions and strengths. These skills are described below.

Learning to communicate

Positive communication means expressing oneself clearly as well as listening well. Communication can enhance close relationships because thoughts and feelings are expressed and clarified. Communication includes the expression of caring and affection. The expression in positive ways of thoughts and feelings that are consistent with actions can be learned.[22,23]

Accentuating the positive

Observing and sharing positive actions, making thoughtful gestures and acknowledging accomplishments makes others feel validated. Parents need to be encouraged to accentuate the positive. Simple actions can be used to emphasize positive qualities and actions. For example, a brief note to a child acknowledging something that he or she did well could be put into the child's lunch box for school.

Expressing feelings

Human beings have a range of feelings that are normal and that need to be expressed and validated. Expressing feelings in constructive ways is crucial in healthy relationships. Sadness, joy, anger and happiness all exist and are neither good nor bad; they exist. The way in which feelings are expressed can lead to close positive relationships in which growth occurs or to non-constructive, often destructive, relationships.

Members of a family usually live so close together that unless they can share their feelings with each other, misunderstandings and tensions tend to develop and they become angry. What should families do with anger? Some people bottle it up and allow it to simmer. Others explode and get relief, often at the expense of someone else. Such an expression of anger is healthier than suppressing it. But there is an even better way: acknowledge anger; regard it as your emotional state; and ask the person with whom you're angry to help you handle it. This approach can lead to constructive results.[22]

Finding ways of expressing feelings that work well for each family member and the family unit is very important. For example, some individuals prefer to express feelings in writing or drawing, others orally; some desire time to reflect while others do not.

The following recommendations foster positive communication:

(a) Avoid "you" statements;

(b) Avoid "why" questions;

(c) Express feelings. Begin sentences with "I feel ..." or "I believe ...". Share your own feelings and let the statement reflect back on you. In this way, you will avoid attacking the other person;

(d) Allow time for resolving issues. To have meaningful family relationships, it is necessary to bring the issues and the feelings about the issues out into the open, and to work at resolving them. This needs to be done again and again. Acknowledging and dealing with differences is necessary in order for each member to live together in a modern democratic family.

Learning to cooperate

Parents with appropriate expectations and limits provide a foundation for cooperation. Children need limits with an external structure that will lead them to develop inner control. Their unbridled impulses can lead them into trouble and situations that are quite scary for children if they are not supported by adults. Children can best learn self-discipline with the cooperation of wise parents.[22]

In previous generations, many parents exercised discipline in an authoritarian manner. Most modern parents reject autocratic rule, but have never been taught the more difficult cooperative method of discipline. As a result, many give up in despair and become "permissive", which often means indulgent, allowing children to do whatever they wish. These young people develop little inner control, which only intensifies their alienation from their parents and their parents' way of life. Parents who value autonomy and self-discipline set appropriate limits.

The cooperative method of parenting includes good communication and interaction between parent and child. This no longer means demanding unquestioning obedience as it once did when the job of parenthood was seen as just an effort to subdue the child's will.

Working cooperatively within the family develops the potential for cooperation and collaboration beyond the home.

Learning to negotiate

Healthy families have learned to deal with conflict in positive ways. This is certainly not to suggest that conflict is not absent in their homes. The issue is not whether conflict occurs but how conflicts are resolved within families. How can parents teach their children to deal with conflict in constructive ways? In their behaviour, parents need to provide model ways of resolving conflict. It is difficult for parents to help their children to resolve their differences if they are not willing or able to work out their own. Parents must be encouraged to apply these skills as an educative responsibility to their children.

Many parents are plagued with doubts about whether they are doing the right thing. Healthy families talk things over with their children, especially when there is disagreement. When parents feel that they must say no to their children's requests or set limits with which the children disagree, careful explanations should be provided so that their children understand the reasons for the decisions. Children must feel that they deserve an explanation for parental decisions that affect them.

Parents must learn to negotiate if they want to influence their children positively. As children grow older, outside influences loom larger on the horizon than they did in the past. For instance, because families are smaller than they were in the past, children often seek close companions outside the home, especially when siblings are far apart in age. In increasingly pluralistic societies, values that children have learned at home are more likely to be contradicted by different values that their companions have acquired in their own families. At quite an early age, children sense this conflict of loyalties.

The conflict grows acute for adolescents who in gaining independence may find themselves more and more alienated from their parents. At this time of family life, support groups are especially helpful for parents and adolescents as well as for the family.

Learning to release children into adulthood

Adolescence is, by definition, the state or process of growing up. Parents need to prepare their teenagers to make their own decisions, which means gradually releasing decision-making power into their hands.[24]

Parents of older children may support the increasing autonomy of their teenage children by expressing the process in a manner such as the following:

> "My job is not to give you orders, but to help you make your own decisions and stand on your own feet. I'm also responsible for you and want to protect you from the dangerous situations you may get into because of your lack of experience. I'll give you freedom and responsibility a little at a time, as we both feel you're ready for it. If you can handle it, then you've earned the right to a little more freedom. If you can't, then we'll wait until you've gained enough new experience to try again."

Once this kind of agreement has been established between parent and child, the way is open for cooperation.

Passing the torch on to the next generation is not easy, but there are some things that parents can do to facilitate the transition from adolescence to responsible adulthood. Parents can do a better job of letting go if they understand the goals of adolescence.

In an adolescent-parent study that involved 8,165 young adolescents and 10,467 parents, Merton and Irene Strommen[25] identified seven goals that most adolescents intuitively seek to achieve during their teenage years:

(a) Achievement: the satisfaction of achieving a standard of excellence in some area of endeavour;

(b) Friendships: the broadening of one's social base by having learned to make friendships and maintain them;

(c) Feelings: the self-understanding gained through having learned to share one's feelings with another person;

(d) Identity: the sense of knowing "who I am", of being recognized as a significant person;

(e) Responsibility: the confidence of knowing "I can stand alone and make responsible decisions";

(f) Maturity: the transformation from a child into an adult;

(g) Sexuality: the acceptance of responsibility for one's new role as a sexual being.

Parents can help with the achievement of these goals through helping their adolescents understand themselves and the world around them. Parents need to encourage responsible citizenship and the equality of all, stressing the worth of the individual.

Basically the goal of parenting can be summarized in one phrase: "To prepare your child to function independently as an adult."[26]

II. State of the contemporary family

"The task of modern parents is much more complicated than it used-to-be."[26]

"Many parents just stand on the sidelines in a state of exasperated helplessness while their children are raised by the mass media![26]

The current situation in the United States illustrates how families are at risk and how family enrichment can be used in intervention as well as prevention programmes for families.

The high rate of marital breakdown and the growing trend of serial monogamy means that fewer and fewer children have the opportunity of growing up in stable and predictable family settings. Large numbers of children spend at least some years of their lives in one-parent families. For example, before they reach the age of 18, two out of three children born in the United States in 1993 could expect to live in a single-parent household.[27]

The following statistics are illustrative:

One out of four households in the United States is headed by a single parent with one or more children;

Nine out of ten (90 per cent) single-parent families are headed by the mother;

There are more than 14 million single parents in the United States;

The Census Bureau of the United States estimates that more than six out of every 10 children born in the mid-1990s will live in a single-parent home before they reach their eighteenth birthday.*

In a controversial collection of articles, *The Atlantic Monthly* took to task those who propose that single-parent families are as adequate for children as two-parent families. Boldly stated on the cover of the April 1993 issue was the statement: "After decades of public dispute about so-called family diversity, the evidence from social-science research is coming in: The dissolution of two-parent families, though it may benefit the adults involved, is harmful to many children, and dramatically undermines our society."[28] Moreover, the author, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, argues that, "Family diversity in the form of an increasing number of single-parent and step-parent families does not strengthen the social fabric but, rather, dramatically weakens and undermines society".

The current situation is not encouraging. Children in single-parent families are two to three times as likely to have emotional or behavioural problems. They are two and a half times as likely to give birth out of wedlock. According to an article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, the out-of-wedlock birth rate jumped from 5 per cent in 1960 to 27 per cent in 1990.[28]

Often the parent who is parenting alone is experiencing considerable emotional stress. The trauma of divorce often means that a child has to deal with parting company with one parent and sometimes adjusting to a step-parent, as well as to any other children brought into the new family

*Marriage and divorce statistics are from the Barna Research Group and taken from research studies the Group has conducted over the past decade and from data accumulated and reported by the National Center for Health Statistics in Washington, D.C. in a statistical abstract of the United States for 1991.

circle created by a new marriage. Such changes can be traumatic experiences and result in the loss of security. While children suffer if their parents' marriages break up, they also suffer in homes where their parents are together but in conflict.

Judith Wallerstein, one of the pioneer researchers on the long-term psychological impact of family disruption on children, states that parent-child relationships are permanently altered by divorce in ways that society has not anticipated. She writes, "Divorce is deceptive. Legally it is a single event, but psychologically it is a chain ... sometimes a never-ending chain ... of events, relocations, and radically shifting relationships strung through time; a process that forever changes the lives of the people involved".

Five years after their parents had divorced, more than a third of the children experienced moderate or severe depression and performance problems in school, had trouble in establishing meaningful friendships, exhibited chronic responses to the resulting loneliness and feelings of rejection, and had unrealistic hopes of parental reconciliation.[29]

Wallerstein's research which was published in 1989 and summarized in *The Atlantic Monthly*, gives a sobering picture of divorce: "The child of divorce faces many additional psychological burdens in addition to the normative tasks of growing up."

By any measure, the disruptive and damaging effects of familial breakdown underscores the need to give families both intervention and preventive support. In an initial crisis as a result of divorce, death or an unwanted pregnancy, remedial supports are needed. Help is also needed with ongoing issues faced by families at risk as well as in developing strong marriages, educating for parenthood, and implementing early intervention when families are at risk.

Intervention

There must be intervention-based programmes to deal with family crises such as a divorce, domestic violence or the death of one's partner. This is comparable to the hospital emergency room or intensive-care treatment. Offering this kind of support can help the affected parties to stabilize their lives and ensure that basic protection and material needs are met.

Intervention programmes such as divorce-recovery workshops, emergency financial aid, and, where abuse is an issue, the provision and protection of safe houses or shelters of safety are necessary and required.

In any intervention programme, the goal is to sustain and move the individual or family towards self-sufficiency. If this goal is achieved, the economic cost to the State of such interventions is more than returned. Empowered healthy families have a potential to contribute to society that is not present in families with problems.

Enrichment

Examples of the community services that fall under enrichment programmes would be providing parenting support groups, and the provision of family-life education and short-term shelter services that help families in need with tasks and everyday necessities. Community services may include financial planning, and food and baby-sitting cooperatives offered in a variety of ways.

Supportive networks, strategies on how to stay in touch with grandparents and other relatives, child care, tips for economical shopping, and even short-term financial support are all areas that may need to be provided for families at risk. Questionnaire research and other methods are indispensable in identifying current family needs.

While intervention and family enrichment programmes are vital, ultimately preventative measures must be emphasized; so that families might be able to avoid some of those problems that require intervention.

There are models for family and parent enrichment programmes that can be used in both prevention and intervention. One such programme, MOM's & DAD's Support Group,* has been used in schools, churches, businesses and organizations in Europe, Hong Kong and the United States.

Challenge to action

In this period of profound technological advances and unprecedented change, the family supports of the past are insufficient for meeting the familial needs of the present. Humankind is able to send people to the moon, to travel faster than the speed of sound, to fax information halfway across the world in seconds and to access think-tanks with computers, but lacks the interpersonal competencies that are needed to build loving relationships. Action on both the personal, local, national and international levels to make family wellness a priority needs to be encouraged.

Community-based, family-life education and enrichment programmes supported by policies, human and economic resources can contribute in major ways to the development of healthy families, and to building the smallest unit in democracy at the heart of society. Action for programmes and services to foster the healthy development of families must be a priority supported by individuals, families, Governments and non-governmental organizations. The future depends upon humankind taking responsibility immediately for this change in priorities from an emphasis on therapy to promoting healthy development. The basic elements and global significance of this proposition are taken up in the epilogue of the present paper.

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*MOM's & DAD's Support Group is a video-based curriculum designed for small groups of parents to help them prepare for the adolescent years of their children. At this high-stress time of family life, it is easy for parents to feel inadequate, frustrated and lonely. Such a parenting support group can help to counteract these feelings by teaching skills for building positive parent-child relationships and providing a support network. MOM's & DAD's includes a video series with practical tips for building positive family relationships. Small group discusssions follow the video presentations that are geared to the specific needs of parents of adolescents in Western cultures. The small group provides an opportunity for parents to network with other parents and to support and encourage one another. These programmes have been successful in part because they are easily transferable and are parent-led. Characteristically, family enrichment involves active participation in carefully designed interactions and learning skills such as decision-making, problem-solving and conflict resolution as well as general open discussions about topics of concern to the participants. Family enrichment programmes provide parents with a network of supportive friendships and basic help in building strong relationship with their children. They give hope, help and encouragement.

Epilogue

The family and world peace*

"World peace", how easily those words fall from one's lips, and how eagerly and hopefully they come from one's heart, but in one's mind one must wrestle with the almost superhuman challenge of dealing with the persistent and ever-widening question: "How can this be?"

First, one must recognize that the question of world peace today has become more urgent than ever before. Ten years ago, the author of the present epilogue and her late husband wrote in their *Marriage Enrichment Newsletter*:

> "For the first time in human history, we possess instruments of war that could destroy the human race. In the past it was fists, then clubs, then spears, then bows and arrows, then rifles, then shells - and now nuclear bombs.
>
> "But the human factor remains the same - from a quarrel in the kitchen to an argument at the work place, from a confrontation in the street to a feud between opposing families, from clans and tribes raiding each other to nations at war."

In the 10 years since, how have humans dealt with these increasing threats in their lives? Are they living in complacent acceptance? In a mood of doomed inevitability? In increasing helplessness? In fearful and overwhelming despair? There are no short answers to these questions, because the causes and effects of war are too numerous and too varied to list in a short paper. However, when reduced to their lowest common denominator, the questions focus on the fact that a breakdown in human relationships is basic to them all. So it is imperative to consider human relationships.

Patterns of human relationships have changed widely and deeply throughout the world, particularly in the last hundred years. But one factor has remained unchanged and universal, the complete dependence of all human life on relationships. A child is conceived as a result of a human relationship (even in the exceptional case of artificially contrived conception), and before birth is dependent for survival on a relationship with the mother. After birth, the child must learn to live with others, hopefully its own family of origin.

The potential for learning how "to live peace" starts from day one of a person's life. So many factors determine what form emerging family relationships will take - nurture, culture, experience, individual endowments and disposition - but through all of them the child is learning how to live. Confucius, the Chinese philosopher of the fifth century B.C. is reputed to have said:

> "When there is love in the marriage, there is harmony in the home; when there is harmony in the home there is contentment in the community; when there is contentment in the community there is prosperity in the nation; when there is prosperity in the nation there is peace in the world."

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*Prepared by Vera Mace, who with her late husband, David Mace, worked for marriage enrichment during their 57 years of marriage. They became joint executive directors of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and founded the Association of Couples in Marriage Enrichment in 1973. Having written numerous books and conducted workshops and seminars throughout the world, the Maces are known and respected throughout the world for their pioneering work in marriage and family enrichment. In her retirement, Vera Mace continues to write and influence families around the world.

The message of the present paper is that in that kind of family, multiplied astronomically, the hope may lie of human beings ever achieving world peace.

Does this, therefore, mean that those persons who are no longer in families in which children are present must wait until other generations can produce new families wholly dedicated to learning and promoting peace from the beginning of life? Happily, no. In his Foreword to Thich Nhat Hanh's book, the Dalai Lama says:

> "Peace must first be developed within an individual. And I believe that love, compassion, and altruism are the fundamental bases for peace. Once these qualities are developed within an individual, he or she is then able to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. This atmosphere can be expanded and extended from the individual to his family, from the family to the community and eventually to the whole world."[30]

This brings world peace right into the orbit of every person. In Thich Nhat Hanh's words: "The roots of war are in the way we live our daily lives - the way we develop our industries, build up our society, and consume goods."[31]

Thich Nhat Hanh then urges his readers "to look deeply" into their living in these areas in order that they may transcend their tendency to blame and take sides in situations of conflict and learn understanding, particularly of the suffering of "all sides" in any conflict.

Though no individual, however talented, can ever bring peace to the world, each person can create a tiny corner of the world where peace truly reigns. To this end, many people today are seeking, humbly but sincerely, to make their contribution. Over a hundred years ago, Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote:

> "For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
> Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be ...
> "Till the war-drum throbbed no longer,
> and the battle flags were furl'd.
> In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."[32]

How far has humankind come since then? Is it travelling in the right direction? A. J. Muste of the Fellowship of Reconciliation put it best when he said, "There is no way to peace; peace is the way".

Notes

[1]Nicholas Stinnett, "Strong families", in *Marriage and Family in a Changing Society*, J. Hemslin and others, eds. (New York, The Free Press, 1992), pp. 496-506.

[2]David and Vera Mace, *Close Companions* (New York, Continuum, 1982).

[3]Vera Mace, *365 Meditations for Women* (Nashville, Tennessee, Abingdon Press, 1989), pp. 126-127.

[4]R. Catalano and P. Dooley, "Economic change in primary prevention", in *Prevention in Mental Health: Research, Policy and Practice,* D. Mace and others, eds. (Beverly Hills, California, Sage, 1983), pp. 21-40.

[5]Luciano L'Abate, "Prevention as a profession" in *Prevention in Family Services*, D. Mace and others, eds. (Beverly Hills, California, Sage, 1983), pp. 49-61.

[6]Carnegie Corporation of New York, "Foundation President urges action agenda for families and children", press release, 30 July 1992.

[7]Ted W. Bowman, "Promoting family wellness : implications and issues", in *Prevention in Family Services*, D. Mace and others, eds. (Beverly Hills, California, Sage, 1983), p. 40.

[8]John Bradshaw, *Bradshaw on: The Family* (Deerfield Beach, Florida, Health Communications, 1988).

[9]David and Vera Mace, *In the Presence of God* (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1985), p. 9.

[10]University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Department of Human Development and Family and Conferences and Institutes, *Building Family Strengths: A Manual for Families* (March, 1986).

[11]Nicolas Stinnett, "Strong families: a portrait" in *Prevention in Family Services*, D. Mace and others, eds. (Beverly Hills, California, Sage, 1983), pp. 27-38.

[12]Nicholas Stinnett and John DeFrain, *Secrets of Strong Families* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1986).

[13]D. Yankelovich, New Rules: *Searching for Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down* (New York, Random House, 1981).

[14]David Mace, *Prevention in Family Services* (Beverly Hills, California, Sage, 1983).

[15]Claudia Arp, *Beating the Winter Blues* (Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson, 1991).

[16]James M. Hemslin, *Marriage and Family in a Changing Society* (New York, The Free Press, 1992).

[17]Dave and Claudia Arp, *60 One-Minute Family Builder Series* (Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson, 1993).

[18]H. A. Otto, "The personal and family strength research projects: some implications for the therapist", *Mental Hygiene* No. 48 (1964), pp. 349-450.

[19]J. M. Lewis and others, *No Single Thread: Psychological Health in Family Systems* (New York, Brunner/Mazel, 1976).

[20]J. M. Lewis, *How's Your Family*? (New York, Brunner/Mazel, 1979).

[21]P. T. Nelson and B. Banonis, "Family concerns and strengths identified at Delaware's White House Conference on Families" in *Family Strengths 3: Roots of Well-Being* (Lincoln, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

[22]David and Vera Mace, *Men, Women and God* (Atlanta, Georgia, John Knox Press, 1976).

[23]David Mace, *Love and Anger in Marriage* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1982).

[24]Claudia Arp, *Almost 13* (Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson, 1986).

[25]Merton and Irene Strommen, *Five Cries of Parents* (New York, Harper & Row, 1985), p. 6.

[26]*Men, women and God* ..., p. 23.

[27]George Barna, *The Future of the American Family* (Chicago, Illinois, Moody Press, 1993).

[28]Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle was right", *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1993), pp. 47-84.

[29]Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *Second Chances* (New York, Ticknor & Fiends, 1989), p. xvii.

[30]Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step* (New York, Bantam Books, 1991), p. vii.

[31]Ibid., p. 115.

[32]Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1897).